

As A Little Child

Were it possible for me to preach a sermon on this last Sabbath day of 1905, the 15th verse of the 10th chapter of St. Mark would be the text. "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein."

These words of the Master suggested to me a suitable line of thought for New Year's because of four Christmas pictures. A brief description of each will fittingly introduce our theme.

Seated in a large rocking chair an elderly man is holding in fond embrace the precious little babe which has conferred upon him the title of "grandfather". A new light gleams from the aged eyes, while a soft and tender smile steals its way from one wrinkle to another unt.

the old man's face is aglow with the joy his full heart cannot hold.

Another is that of a little girl at the piano. Her sweet voice is leading her grandmother's through the simple petitions of a child's prayer. Somehow, as we listened to that song, the gate of Heaven appeared, and walking towards it was blind old age being led by the hand of an innocent child.

A third picture is that of Santa Claus giving a present to his youngest boy. Harold's attitude ~~is~~ that of one who suddenly finds himself in the presence of a wonderful but kind being. On his countenance ~~is~~ plainly written a child's simple credulity. We older ones enjoyed the scene immensely, while our expressions seemed to say, "Well, my little man, when you get to be as wise as we are, you will learn

that Santa Claus is only a myth after all. "In spite of the consciousness of a superior knowledge over that of Harold's, I ~~was~~ ^{am} forced to the conclusion that the little fellow ~~was~~ ^{is} closer to the truth of the matter than we grown-ups think we are. Santa Claus to him is a being who is always kind and just ~~and~~ to ~~everybody~~ to everybody. After we become old enough to divest St. Nicholas of his mask and furs, how many of us recognize in the hidden father or brother or friend or stranger a being who is kind and just to everybody? Primitive man clothed Almighty God with finite conceptions of Him. Now that man has reached the degree of development which enables him to tear away the false conceptions of antecedent generations and disclose the real Heavenly Father in the full glory of and majesty of His omnipotence.

Omnipresence, and Omniscience, there are many who, priding themselves in the possession of a wisdom and knowledge far superior to those of past ages, fail to recognize the real Infinite Being as the Giver of all life and of all good.

The fourth picture is printed on every box of candy given to the children. Santa Claus spinning along in an automobile. The old sleigh drawn over the snow by graceful and light-footed ~~reigh~~ reindeer, travels too slowly for our modern St. Nick. Instead of the jingling of Merry sleigh-bells, the auto's chug-chug is the first greeting from the King of the North Pole to the wide awake children on Christmas eve. The old familiar blast of the horn cannot be heard above the deafening sound of the rubber trumpet. The fragrance of the Christmas tree with

which the boys and girls so love to fill their lungs is lost amid the odor of gasoline. We are living in an automobile age. Partially, but not entirely educated; somewhat, but not very learned; and proud of ~~their~~ science and art and literature; our generation, acting as ~~her~~ ^{her} own chauffeur, hastens to drive the new Vanderbilt 152 miles per hour-machine.

Because of the present unchildlike age, whose very children are not childlike, we can the better prepare ourselves for the New Year by taking to heart the words of Jesus, "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein."

In order to vivify in our own minds the childlikeness in question, let each one of us journey through the past years until we reach our

~~over~~ infant days. Through what a labyrinth of shameful memories we must go! A network of entangling associations confronts us. On, on, through intricate passageways of base hopes and venomous pleasures we trace our footprints. Covering the winding walls of our endless maze, we again see the tawdry splendors that lured us from one failure to another. The number of hindrances to ~~the~~ Life's Better Way that we encounter is appalling. Oh, could we but shut our eyes to the sight of our footprints deeply impressed in the ruts and mudholes of sin; but through it all we must go before we can enter into our respective boyhood and girlhood days.

Once at our journey's end, however, the transition of the scene is wonderful.

Knowledge of evil no longer haunts us, for we feel the warm sunlight shining down upon us from a clear blue sky of innocence. Happy were the days of our youth when we knew no cares, shouldered no responsibilities and carried no burdens!

I distinctly remember the time when I wore dresses; but to be honest, I have no recollection of ever possessing a pair of wings. We were not perfect then. Many were our childish faults, sprouting here and there like weeds in a garden. Human nature is born with every child. When Christ gathered the little ones about Him and exclaimed with deep feeling, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God," He had in mind the very little ones whom He blessed, boys and girls.

just like you and I were once.

Do you know, dear friends, that there are many who, like the Disciples, did, believe that children cannot receive the grace of God because their minds are not sufficiently matured to ~~receive~~ ^{have} spiritual understanding?

Pardon personal references, but I am ashamed to say that I thought so at one time.

A number of years ago when I could see no good in religion, mother happened to show me my baptismal certificate.

"Mother," I said, "what good did that christening ever do me? I knew nothing of it at the time, therefore, it was a useless and empty ceremony so far as I am concerned." I could not

understand how my words should have hurt mother's feelings so. For fully a minute she could not speak. Finally, from her trembling lips came the reply, "Arthur, when Mr With baptised you,

I gave you to the Lord and the Lord blessed you. When you grow older, perhaps not until your mother is taken from you, however, you will learn to know the meaning of it all."

Oh blind and heartless man, who, seeing the baby natures responding so readily to the influence of loving mothers, like so much clay in the hands of skillful potters, refuses a child, in whom he knows is the germ tendency to sin, the gift of the grace of God!

When we were but a day old, our good mothers were breathing gentleness and love into our natures. Long before we ever had a thought of any kind we were receiving the grace of God from our mothers. The little ones upon whom Jesus bestowed a blessing, had, throughout their lives, something which other children had not. The

little ones that are consecrated to God
by their Christian mothers at the baptismal
font, also, have something which other
children do not have. Thanks be
unto the Lord for the Grace of God
which passeth our little understanding.

Recalling to mind the words of our
supposed text, let us consider some
of the childlike qualities to which
Christ had reference when he told us
that we must become as a little
child, if we wished to enter the kingdom
of God. Certainly one of these is humility.
The child recognizes the parents' authority.
It seeks their protection, follows their
guidance and submits to their will. ●
This is precisely what God wants His
grown-up children ^{to do}. We must obey God,
follow His guidance, and seek His
protection.

Another necessary childlike quality

is trust. How great is the faith of a child in its parents! "I know it is true because papa says so."

It trusts absolutely, not because it reasons, for it cannot, but because it loves supremely. Faith is a matter of the heart and not of the head. The more we love Jesus the more we believe Him; the more we love God, the better we serve Him; and the more we love our redeemed and unredeemed brothers and sisters the more useful and helpful are we to them.

A child is ever ready to receive simply. It depends entirely upon the mother and father for all its wants. Dependence is a natural result of humility. A man who has plenty of money in the bank, and plenty of good health and is at peace with the world naturally feels independent.

When taken sick, however, he at once places himself under a doctor's care. When he gets into trouble, he becomes a child in the hands of his lawyer. This is not the way Christ would have us do. We are receiving God's blessings constantly, and without them we cannot live; therefore, even as the child we must receive the gifts of God simply, ever conscious of our dependence upon Him.

Children are always learning. Conscious of their own ignorance, they learn the more readily and accurately. I know a boy who tore the cover off of a new one-dollar ball, and unraveled the yarn just to see what was in the center. With all of our education and ~~knowledge~~ ^{wisdom} culture, human knowledge compared to that of the All-knowing One is as nothing. Hence the most learned

men claim to know the least, while the man who knows it all knows nothing. The children of God must ever be learning. God's Holy Word is to be studied unceasingly, and His wonderful works are to be examined thoroughly. Seeking to learn and learning to seek in a simple childlike way is not only the best and quickest ^{method} way of acquiring a thorough education, but it is also one of the Christian duties.

The child is ever growing - taller, and broader, and stronger. There is nothing set, or stationary about it. Are you a child of the King? If you are daily becoming more able to control and restrain yourselves, if you are gradually approaching the ideal which is in Christ Jesus; if, as the years roll by, you see God more clearly, and commune with Him more readily; if, in short, you are a growing Christian and

a matured one who is "set" in all his ways, then, and not until then, are you a child of the Heavenly King.

Again, a child's vision of things is real. It not only sees the picture of a thing, but actualizes the thing itself in its own mind. Santa Claus is a reality to Harold. The child makes substance of everything it sees and hears. In like manner Christ would have our vision of spiritual things to be real and actual. We must have more than a mental picture of God; ~~we must~~ our faith in Christ Jesus must be based on something deeper than intellectual understanding. We must have God Himself in our hearts and Christ Himself in our lives as the very substance of our Christianity. Did it ever occur to you, dear

friends, that children as a rule live only in the present moment? The yesterdays do not crowd their memories as they do ours. Their tomorrows are not full of troubles as ours are. ~~Their todays~~ Unlike ours, their todays are not burdened with regrets for the past and with anxieties for ~~the~~ future troubles that seldom, if ever come. The child living in the present only, gets out of life mostly sunshine and delight. Forgetting the dismal labyrinth of the past, and seeing only Jesus Christ in advance to show us the way, let us meet our today's duty, carry our today's cross and enter into our today's pleasures with the joy of a happy child.

When the New Year is about to be ushered in, we like to believe that an unusual event is taking

place. It furnishes a convenient time to balance up personal accounts and take a new start.

The consciences of some men are like volcanoes. They remain inactive for 364 days, but during the last twenty-four hours of the dying year they belch forth the burning lava of misdeeds, neglected duties, and shameful habits and the ashes of ~~the~~ last New Year's resolutions. While the craters are still open, new sets of resolutions are thrown up which are to be the moral codes for the ~~future~~ next twelve months. The lava cools off, a thick crust gathers over the craters, and consciences resume their inactivity for another 52 weeks. Some consciences are like extinct volcanoes, that is, they never become active.

A Christian's conscience is not volcanic at all. It is the wireless telegraph station of the soul receiving messages from God and

answering all questions that may be asked by the Heavenly King. It is in running order day and night, and every day of ~~every~~ ^{the} year.

If we are not satisfied with our 1905 record, let us not try to ease our consciences by making a lot of resolutions. Let each one take his or her dissatisfaction to the Lord in prayer. He will clearly show us wherein we can do better during all years to come than we ever have done in the past. Perhaps God cares less for what we would like to get out of life than He does for what we are going to put into it. There may be some message of cheer that Jesus would have us take to some friend who is in trouble or to some acquaintance still in darkness. We talk of the great revival in England; how about a revival of the Holy Spirit in our own hearts?

The singing of the Glory Song by 10,000 voices in the city of London sends a thrill through our very souls; but, dear friends, the pitiful cries of London's 800,000 ~~who~~ ~~are~~ out of employment and facing starvation demand that the tune be changed to

"Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave, Weep o'er the erring one, Lift up the fallen, Tell throned Jesus the mighty to save. Rescue the perishing, Care for the dying; Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save."

"Down in the human heart, Crushed by the knouter, Feelings lie buried that grace can restore: Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness, Chords that were broken will vibrate once more." Everywhere are starving souls that need our Saviour, Jesus Christ. In every city, town, and hamlet, ^{and} in every rural district, ~~and~~ are many dying ^{because} ~~for~~ they ^{have not} ~~take~~ the waters of life.

On this last day of the old year Jesus is asking you and me to accept the kingdom of God as little children by trusting in Him implicitly, by loving Him with all our hearts, and by giving ourselves into His service. He wants us to become more humble, He would that we have more faith and be more faithful. It will please our Master if we receive the daily gifts of God more simply. Jesus urges us to acquire a practical education and working knowledge of the wisdom of God, by keeping our minds more open to and concentrated upon His Word, and by making our hearts' desire a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The Lord would that the year 1906 find us growing in God's grace as we never have done before. Taller in our manliness and womanliness; deeper in the faith; broader

in our conceptions of God and man; more
positive in our convictions of spiritual truths;
and stronger in our Lord Jesus Christ.

As children of God we are to triumph
over each present day by pouring
into them the happiness and love
and the joy of service to our Heavenly
Father and to our fellow beings.

Then, when the real ~~tomorrow~~
tomorrow of Eternity comes, what a
gathering that will be! A heaven full
of joyful hearts and bright smiling faces,
for the redeemed ~~are~~ are all happy
children. No grown-ups with long faces
in the home above, dear ones. The kingdom
of God is over half full of babes, and
the rest are growing children. When we
are safe on that beautiful shore, the
mighty throng of God's children will
join in with the angels to sing forever
the Glory Song of the Ages.